

IFES/KYRGYZSTAN QUARTERLY REPORT

Q2-02 -- January – March 2002

I. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

Secondary School Civic Education

During the second quarter of FY 2002, IFES/Kyrgyzstan continued to distribute the first volume of its interactive Civic Education Textbook and Teacher's Guidebook as part of a pilot course. The materials were disseminated to select secondary schools in and around Bishkek and Osh. Participating schools accepted the materials and integrated them into their existing lesson hours for the second semester of the 2001-2002 school year. A Kyrgyz translation of the textbook was completed and IFES recruited Uzbek translators from Osh to translate the textbook into the Uzbek language. The Ferghana valley has its own dialect of the Uzbek language and IFES considers it important to utilize local expertise to ensure applicability.

IFES assessed effectiveness of the distribution of the first volume of the Civic Education Textbook and Teacher's Manual among Russian teachers of selected secondary schools who have introduced the civics course in their schools. By the end of the quarter, the IFES course was being taught in 58 Russian-speaking schools, of which one third were in the Ferghana valley. Most of the students using the book were 11th graders, although there were some 9th and 10th graders participating in the pilot program as well.

In addition to textbook development, a teacher-training program based on "critical thinking" and interactive teaching methodologies and classroom management was conducted for teachers in the south and north. The training program was well received by the pilot teachers, who provided many suggestions and recommendations for further development of the teacher-training course.

In order to evaluate the progress of teachers during the course of the pilot semester, IFES/Kyrgyzstan conducted a telephone poll of the teachers who participated in teacher-training programs. The teachers indicated that they were satisfied with their training but would like work more on the context; they stated that the course was 'easy' for city students but 'difficult' for rural students – indicating to IFES that aiming the course at the middle level may have reached its target. The teachers also indicated that the course was very much liked by the students, who particularly enjoyed doing the interactive-based assignments. Some students were also contacted during this poll and generally confirmed teachers' sentiments.

Following the printing of 1500 copies of the Kyrgyz-language version of the civics textbook, with funding provided in part by the German Embassy, IFES staff conducted additional teacher training in Osh for teachers of the southern regions. The training program was conducted in joint-cooperation with the Kyrgyz Institute of Education. In addition, to accommodate the language needs of the Uzbek population of the southern regions, the Uzbek translation of the course was completed. The editor and translators of the materials took great care in rendering accurate translations of all words and ideas. They also predicted that since the course was interesting to teachers and students alike, the textbook could soon find its way into schools on the Uzbekistani side of the border with Kyrgyzstan.

IFES/Kyrgyzstan continued to recruit Kyrgyz teachers who could introduce the course in their schools. Most of these teachers are in rural areas, particularly in Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh oblasts, and will be trained. IFES staff also arranged training in Bishkek for Naryn, Issyk-Kul and Chui oblast teachers, which will be followed up with teacher training in Talas oblast. To make it easier to differentiate between the old and new methods of teaching, IFES staff and specialists translated and re-dubbed the training video from Russian into Kyrgyz language, using students and teachers of Orabase University. Training programs will be conducted in joint cooperation with the Kyrgyz Institute of Education.

IFES Civic Education Consultant Simon Jenkins arrived in Bishkek to work with IFES' team of local authors and evaluators to begin work on part two of the textbook. Part one was completed in December, and several chapters in the second part were near finalization at the end of the quarter. Once complete, part two will be submitted to the Institute of Education and Ministry of Education for approval. It is anticipated that both parts will be used in an expanded list of pilot schools when the new school year commences in September 2002.

Currently, IFES' civic education course is being taught in 79 schools in Kyrgyzstan. Of these, there are 54 Russian schools, 21 Kyrgyz schools and 4 Uzbek schools, with 30 schools located in the Ferghana valley. Additional schools will be added based on the availability of textbooks. IFES has pursued outside funding for printing and distribution of the textbooks in multiple languages, and to date has received generous support from the Soros Foundation and German Embassy for these expenses. It will continue to pursue outside funding sources during the next quarter.

University Education Project in Kyrgyzstan

IFES completed collecting education materials for its university civic education project. This project consists of a web-designed student interactive learning program, accompanied by an array of resources not normally available at universities in Kyrgyzstan. The pilot project will be tested in one university in Osh and Bishkek beginning in the fall. Partner universities in Bishkek and Osh have recognized the need to offer specialized educational opportunities in civics-related coursework, and discussion took place throughout the quarter to encourage students in the pedagogical faculty to specialize in civics as part of their training as future teachers.

Material was assembled from a variety of sources, including the secondary school textbook, the Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) website, and other sources including local NGOs and international partners. The material was then copied onto a CD-Rom for testing. IFES and its team of advisors will continue to work to refine the CD and make it user-friendly. Once completed and approved by the individual universities, instructors will be trained in its usage.

By making the resources on a tertiary civic education course more available and encouraging the study of civic education while combining it with new methods of learning, IFES will be able assist and encourage the study of democratic development in Kyrgyz universities.

Student Action Committees

During the second quarter, IFES Student Action Committee (SAC) program for the 2001-2002 academic year was introduced into a number of pilot schools, primarily those who are also using the civics textbook/course. IFES trained 55 teachers from 55 schools in the program, with 43 teachers committing to the program. Of the 55 participating teachers at the training events, 20 teachers are from the Ferghana valley regions of Kyrgyzstan, 19 teachers are from the northern regions and 16 teachers are from Bishkek. Teachers trained were given an instructional manual, updated by IFES to reflect “lessons learned” from the 2000-2001 SAC campaign.

SACs were conducted in participating schools, with teachers serving as mentors for the project. A number of community and school issues were addressed, and students gained first-hand experience in creative problem solving and working as a team towards a common end. The teamwork element was among the most rewarding for the students, who learned how real NGOs function in Kyrgyzstan and work for the benefit of the community as a whole. The experience stimulated many students, who indicated their interest in pursuing voluntary activities in their communities outside of school. The community and school “problems” chosen were genuine issues and of great interest to the students, who learned that there are alternative ways to resolve difficult and divisive issues.

Student Local Government Day

Teachers in the north and south received training on conducting the Student Local Government Day (SLGD) project. They were provided with a copy of the SLGD training manual together with a list of local government officials who could be contacted and agreeable to participating in the project. Teachers organized and oversaw the SLGDs, which were conducted in Bishkek and Osh in February and March. Each student was asked to write an essay of his/her experiences during the SLGD, emphasizing what they learned about the functioning of local government and a citizen’s place in it. Local officials proved very cooperative and interested in sharing their time with students. The students were thrilled to observe the workings of government from the inside, and shadowed the local officials with a trained eye. Students were reminded to see government as an open, representative body working for the people, and were challenged to make critical observations of the way government functions in reality. The project was successful and IFES anticipates expanding it to more locations in 2002-2003. It is hoped that students will ultimately take a greater interest in representative governance and be exposed to a wide variety of opportunities to see first-hand the responsibilities of officials elected to the public domain.

As a result of the SAC and SLGD trainings, 90 teachers and 200 students in the north and south of Kyrgyzstan were educated about SAC and SLGD programs. Many of the teachers previously trained by IFES began to introduce the SAC and SLGD programs into their schools, with the projects receiving enthusiastic support from both school personnel and students. The need for such programs is self-evident at the trainings, as teachers and students also bring their friends, thus swelling the numbers of trained. The response from local government officials has also been very positive, with many not only agreeing to host a student but stating they should have been doing this before and without foreign assistance. IFES staff is gratified to see students’, teachers’ and officials’ activism and hopes that this will support sustainability of IFES’ future programming in the country.

Preparations for Young Women's Leadership Conference

IFES/Kyrgyzstan spearheaded IFES' efforts in organizing the Young Women's Leadership Conference, scheduled for May 9-11, 2002 at Lake Issyk-Kul. The project is being funded using NIS Regional monies from the previous Cooperative Agreement. Five young female leaders from each of four Central Asian countries – Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, were being selected during the quarter based on an entrance exam questionnaire and invited to participate in a three-day conference. A preliminary conference agenda was drafted developed together with local NGO leaders, who will assist in conducting the training, and travel plans for all participants were initiated.

During the event, young women will learn leadership and communications skills and establish bonds among each other and with women's leaders of the region. The group will discuss the issues of gender inequality endemic to the entire region, and on a country-by-country basis. The girls are being selected based on their academic aptitude as well as their interest and experience in women's issues and gender equality. Results of the conference will be fully reported in the next quarterly report.

Local Government Elections

During the second quarter, IFES/Kyrgyzstan worked with the Central Election Commission and other international organizations on preparation of an educational information project for citizens. The project was designed to improve public knowledge of the election of heads of local administration. IFES met with the OSCE ambassador to plan follow-up activities in this sector. IFES partnered with the OSCE in conducting a round-table conference on election issues in late February. The event brought together senior government figures and other dignitaries as well as academics and election practitioners, including Precinct Election Commission staff. Participants discussed election-related issues and made recommendations for the improvement of procedures, in the wake of the major electoral procedural problems identified in the rural areas during recent local elections.

In partnership with the OSCE, IFES conducted a round table in February to discuss local election issues. Chairman Sulayman Imanbayev of the Central Election Commission and Amanbek Karypkulov, head of the presidential staff, participated as special guests of OSCE ambassador Aydin Idil. IFES/Kyrgyzstan Project Manager Chedomir Flego was a main presenter at the discussion. Ambassador Idil highlighted that out of the 460 elections only 256 incumbent administrators were re-elected; the remaining (more than 40%) administrators were either replaced or there were no elections held due to insufficient number of nominated candidates. Ched Flego recalled IFES observation missions conducted for both national and local elections, and discussed findings from monitoring election processing and voting. IFES worked with the CEC to train pollworkers in previous elections and outfitted each polling station in the country with pollworker handbooks and compendiums of election law.

Participants at the conference resolved to draft a program on upgrading qualifications of local government officials; to prepare a legal and economic training program and consider introduction of civic education, gender education and local government courses into the curriculum of higher education establishments; to make further changes and amendments to the Elections Code; to consider the possibility of establishing a training center at Kyrgyz State National University to train elections organizers; to establish a joint consultative methodological council that will include academics, state officials, civic society representatives to sum up administrative and court practice on

adjudication of elections disputes and draft mechanisms for uniform election process implementation and judicial practice, and to broaden NGOs' capabilities to participate in the elections process as PEC officials. IFES pledged to continue to support electoral reform, in accordance with USG priorities and objectives, and encouraged the CEC to continue making positive changes and improvements in both the code and the procedures governing all aspects of electoral administration.

Public Opinion Survey Update

IFES/Washington completed the final report on results of its 2001 Public Opinion Survey, which sought to measure public attitudes on democracy and civil society. The report, which analyzes data over a wide spectrum of issues, is set to be formally released in English in April, with a Russian translation coming thereafter. IFES will brief all appropriate U.S. and Kyrgyz government counterparts prior to release of the written document.

II. MATERIALS PRODUCED

- Volume One of the Civics Education Textbook in Kyrgyz
- Teacher's guidebook in Kyrgyz

III. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

During the second quarter, IFES/Kyrgyzstan concentrated on implementing the civic education course, teacher's guidebook, teacher training in Kyrgyz and translation of the textbook into the Uzbek language. The new textbook was presented to new (mostly Kyrgyz) teachers from 50 schools representing the oblast of Naryn, Issyk-Kul and Talas and to a group in Osh representing the oblast of Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh. IFES now has 58 Russian speaking and 50 Kyrgyz speaking schools teaching the course.

The new materials, which are considerably more interactive, were well received by the teachers at the trainings. However teacher trainings, both in teaching methodology but especially in critical thinking, need to be addressed with a greater level of resources and focus. Teachers continue to ask for more training as it helps to make them more effective in delivery of the course.

While developing tertiary civic education initiative, IFES encountered some difficulties, as there was no educational specialist to coordinate the development and no developed criteria and set academic standards for the coursework. However, the project is now in the hands of a specialist with technical expertise who will adapt the material to the agreed format.

There were no other major issues or problems during the second quarter. The Ministry of Education continues to be of tremendous support and help, as have been the U.S. Embassy and the USAID country office.

IV. RESULTS BASED ON WP ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED DURING Q2 FY 2002

Civic Education Curriculum Reform

Course and materials continually evaluated to assess effectiveness and to adopt recommendations and changes. Interest in civics and democracy is enhanced. Teachers trained to instruct new course using interactive methodology. Students in pilot schools gain greater practical understanding of democracy and civic responsibility. Students demonstrate their knowledge appreciation of democratic governance and volunteerism via exams and participation in extracurricular activities *such as Student Action Committees and Student Local Government Day.*

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In addition to textbook development, a teacher-training program based on "critical thinking" and interactive teaching methodologies and classroom management was conducted for teachers in the south and north. Following the printing of 1500 copies of the Kyrgyz-language version of the textbook, IFES, in joint-cooperation with the Kyrgyz Institute of Education, conducted a training in Osh for teachers of the southern regions. Particular attention was given to the recruitment of Kyrgyz teachers from rural areas of Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh oblasts who could introduce the course in their schools. IFES staff also arranged training in Bishkek for teachers of the northern regions of Naryn, Issyk-Kul and Chui. This training will be followed up with teacher training in Talas oblast. To make it easier to differentiate between the old and new methods of teaching, IFES staff and specialists translated and re-dubbed the training video from Russian into Kyrgyz language.

In order to evaluate the progress of teachers during the course of the pilot semester, IFES/Kyrgyzstan conducted a telephone poll of the teachers who participated in teacher-training programs. The teachers indicated that they were satisfied with their training but would like work more on the context. The teachers also indicated that the course was very much liked by the students.

Student Action Committees

Students gain practical experience in problem-solving, community activism, civil society and local government. Relationships established with local government authorities, NGOs, media representatives. Students' leadership and communications abilities enhanced. Problem of community interest addressed, and put on agenda of local authorities. Students hold elected and non-elected officials accountable through project

activities. Students will be encouraged and, in fact expected, to evaluate the degree to which local officials in any capacity have followed up and responded to the work undertaken as part of the SACs. Students encouraged to use their experience to continue to be involved in civic affairs whether through NGOs, local NGO resource centers, volunteering, community service, or another non-school based form of activism.

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Student Local Government Day

Students exposed to workings of local government gain a greater appreciation and interest in the work and responsibilities of elected officials. Contacts established with representatives of local government. Teachers trained to assume responsibility for implementation of project after IFES' departure. Materials developed on SLGD implementation that serves as an information source and guideline for such future events. Information exchanged among students through oral discussion and written essay leads to greater understanding of workings of local government and citizens' responsibilities vis-à-vis local government in a democratic society.

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University Civic Education

Course and course materials developed on CD-rom and hard copy, including teacher's manual, which are used to educate students on specialized democracy development subjects. Students demonstrate increased proficiency through testing and group projects. Further interest in the subject manifested through student-led university-based Diversity and Awareness Club, leading to increased desire to specialize in gender and elections studies as part of focus on civics. Skills gained that will prepare students as future teachers, political leaders, and activists. Training capacity generated among student-trainers. Civics established as a course concentration at the university level. Interactive exercises developed and used that focus more intensively on gaining practical experience.

IFES completed collecting education materials for its university civic education project. The pilot project will be tested in one university in Osh and Bishkek beginning in the fall. Throughout the quarter, partner universities in Bishkek and Osh encouraged students in the pedagogical faculty to specialize in civics as part of their training as future teachers.

Electoral Law Reform

IFES maintains regular contact with the CEC and examines opportunities for assistance. Any possible assistance activity is discussed with USAID to determine if it is worthy of effort.

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